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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER ACCUSES IRAN OF TRYING TO
DESTABILIZE IRAQ

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Hill for reasons 1.5 b,d

SUBJ: Prime Minister Accuses Iran of Trying to Destabilize
Iraq

¶1. (S) In a September 22 meeting, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki told the Ambassador that Iran is intervening increasingly boldly in the Iraqi political process in a bid to "control the COR" (the Council of Representatives, the Iraqi Parliament). Iran has not discarded use of military means to attain its objectives, Maliki said, but for now it is focusing on political means. If Iran does not succeed in influencing the upcoming Iraqi national elections, Maliki said, he expects to see them return to military actions. Maliki said that the Iranian initiative was thwarted -- dealt a "fatal blow" -- by Dawa's refusal to join the Shi'a alliance being forged for the elections (the Iraqi National Alliance). Iran, he said, is trying to rally the Shi'a to counter the "Saudi project" to align the Sunni states. But if Dawa had joined the Shi'a alliance, he said, that "could have led to sectarian strife."

¶2. (S) Maliki said that Iran is using the Saudi efforts as pretext to continue its intervention in Iraq. On September 21, for example, the Saudis sponsored a meeting in Amman at which at least ten senior Iraqi Sunnis attended, including Rafi al-Issawi. While in Washington, Maliki said, he asked POTUS to intervene with Saudi Arabia to ask them to stop their efforts at rallying the Sunni, in part precisely to avoid inflaming sectarianism and to deny Iran that pretext for similarly seeking to rally the Shi'a. Maliki's concerns in this regard have not abated, he said. He chose not to press this issue again with VPOTUS during his September 18 visit to Baghdad because he felt he had expressed his concerns once and it was not necessary to continue to raise the same issue.

¶3. (S) Turning to the Mujahedin el Khalkh (MEK), the Ambassador urged Maliki not to take any provocative actions prior to the elections. Maliki took this point on board, but replied by asking what outcome the USG sees, and how long this situation can go on. Ambassador stressed that a.) the situation "won't go on forever," b.) the USG has sent a "stern message" to the MEK that they must deal directly with the GOI, not the USG, and c.) the U.S. base near the MEK camp will eventually be closing. The USG has urged the Europeans to take a similar stance, and is seeking greater United Nations involvement in treating the MEK as refugees. Maliki replied that the GOI "has to do something" so that it can say it has started the process. Otherwise, he said, this issue will be used against him in the elections. In Maliki's view, "whoever wants to return to their country can do so." The rest, he said, should be relocated away from the Iranian border, to protect them and Iraq from Iranian pressure. Iran, Maliki said, at one time was even contemplating a long-range missile strike on the camp, and even today is considering filing a case against Iraq for "harboring a terrorist organization." The GOI must try to relocate "at

least 1,000" members before the end of the year, Maliki said, returning to his theme that the GOI must do something prior to the elections. Ambassador emphasized that any attempt to forcibly remove members could lead to bloodshed and crisis, and again urged Maliki not to do so. Maliki said he felt most members would willingly relocate. Only the leadership of the group objects, and they are "criminals."

14. (S) Comment: Maliki,s comments regarding Iranian
Q4. (S) Comment: Maliki,s comments regarding Iranian involvement in internal Iraqi affairs are the strongest we have heard. The Shi,a alliance INA is under considerable pressure from the Iranians to persuade or even threaten Maliki,s Dawa party to join the alliance, but on terms unfavorable or unsatisfactory to either Dawa or Maliki. He anticipates that if he pursues his non-sectarian State of Law alliance, he will encounter not only stiff resistance from the INA but also heavy and active opposition from the Iranians. Regarding MEK, while it appears that the GOI will not move immediately after Ramadan against the camp,s residents, the eventual transfer operation will likely occur before the end of the year. We will continue to advocate patience, direct GOI-MEK negotiation for a peaceful transfer and involvement of an international organization. End Comment.
HILL